Sustainable Events Case Study

During the Year of Natural Scotland 2013, EventScotland commissioned Positive Impacts to work with a number of events through a Sustainable Events Education Programme aimed at assisting events with reference to their environmental, social and economic impact. Case studies have been developed by events to show how they implemented activity in 2013 and how they intend to build on this in future years.

HebCelt 2013

2013 was the 18th annual outing of HebCelt. The festival regularly attracts audiences of over 15,000 over its four day run, many of whom travel to the island specifically for the event. The majority of visitors have local ties choosing this time to visit family and friends.

All site facilities have to be brought on to the island and therefore logistics are both challenging and costly with many factors playing a part in the successful staging of the festival.

Environment considerations are extremely important for the team behind the festival and improvements have been made over the last 3–5 years particularly in reducing waste to landfill.

Onsite costs are minimal as the festival enjoys in-kind support from key suppliers such as electricity, waste and water companies.

HebCelt Sustainability Objectives for 2013 included:

- To reduce their carbon emissions targeting transport mileage.
- Reducing emissions on site by shifting reliance from generators to mains
- Further reducing waste to landfill by 10%
- Reducing plastic waste onsite
- Positive PR around promoting their sustainability measures and raising the profile of their environmental targets.

Meeting the Objectives

Reducing transport mileage was the festival’s biggest challenge. However they did manage to source some equipment from different suppliers, and in working with their transport manager to rationalise loads, reduced road mileage for site facilities by 18% which was over the initial target HebCelt set for itself. The festival was able to make a further 10% reduction in waste to landfill. This was a supreme effort by volunteer staff who managed to ensure that 67% of all waste generated onsite was either recycled or processed by the local digester plant.
HebCelt also took part in a government backed pilot initiative through Zero Waste Scotland to place Reverse Vending machines on the main site. This helped to raise awareness of their environmental targets and provided further strong statistics for future measuring.

**Overcoming Difficulties**

The hot weather played a significant part in the increased demand for site water. Two public facing water points were established, installed with cup dispensers. The use of water bottles was promoted by retailing branded bottles, made from recycled materials, to allow festival goers to replenish free of charge.

Supplies of bottled water, although initially halved from the amount purchased in 2012, had to be replenished due to the extremely hot weather. It was therefore difficult to track exactly what, if any, reductions were made in reducing plastic on-site in 2013. There now exists however a more accurate record for future measuring.

**Outcomes & Achievements**

Monitoring of suppliers and the materials that are brought onsite is critical as despite the clear issuing of terms and conditions some will disregard these, particularly in the case of food dispensing. This area will require closer monitoring.

Through the Reverse Vending project and the associated publicity generated HebCelt received excellent feedback from festival goers on the cleanliness of the site throughout the festival. Post event feedback was tremendous and this single project did a huge amount to raise the festival’s profile as a ‘green’ event.
‘Thought the recycling was a fantastic idea as we didn’t see any discarded rubbish anywhere also it kept the kids busy.’ (Festival Attendee)

HebCelt’s sustainability efforts during 2013 were also recognised by A Greener Festival, where they achieved an Outstanding Award, the only festival in Scotland to have received such a high accolade.

**HebCelt Sustainability Future**

2013 was highly positive year punctuated by the publicity surrounding the Reverse Vending machines and HebCelt are confident that they have made significant inroads in meeting sustainability action plan goals.

Beyond 2013 the festival will need to consider how to replace the Reverse Vending machines and how to fund the clear up in future whether through a cup return scheme or another new project.

HebCelt do feel sure that they can continue to work at reducing waste to landfill although a great deal of volunteer effort is required to continue this excellent progress.

The event perceives that it will be a challenge to make many more inroads on reducing site transportation because of the island nature of the location which will always be subject to availability of the infrastructure required during the busy summer season.

HebCelt will continue to seek ways of reducing its carbon footprint and work with suppliers to do so.

[www.hebceltfest.com](http://www.hebceltfest.com)